

WOMEN AT WORK

rod set into a base of clay, rotated steadily as she worked. Her fingers moved fast, for she did not require too fine a thread. The raw cotton, she said, she got from a wild "cotton tree." Cotton which was picked in the fields and which grew from seeds planted in the ground, she did not know at all. Was there such cotton? 644
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Working in the fields, she continued, was not too difficult. It was a woman's work. A woman did not mind it. From earliest childhood girls followed their mothers about, and learned how to work the fields. 644
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"What is hard is having to cut my own field. I have no man to cut it for me. I must cut it myself."

She paused for an instant to right her thread.

"When I plant my field, and pray to the gods to make the seed grow, then I ask the Earth Mother to help me find a way to get a man to cut my field for me. 'Earth Mother,' I say, 'help me find a man to cut my field. I have great need of a man to burn my ground.' . . ."

Seeing two women approach, she said, "Fenekonde here is like myself, she too needs a man to cut her field."

But this needed explaining. Here were two women who called the Granman "husband," and who shared the difficulty of having to clear their own fields.

It was soon made apparent, however, that both of these women were only nominally wives of the Granman. They had married into his family. When kunu, however, killed one successor to his office after the other, these women were made widows. Like the widow who now worked alone before her house which fronted the clearing, where stood the shrine to the great gods and the Granman's principal houses, they had worn tattered clothes, and a twisted kerchief as a band on their heads. For five months this had lasted, and then a dance was given. 644
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Did the white woman know about the ceremony called *gai Adyo*?

The white woman had heard the word Dyo-dyo from natives of the town many times. Once, indeed, a question about it put to an old woman, who it later developed was 774

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Thereupon follows a second, who just like the first has a calabash in hand, but this time filled with spirituous liquor, and from time to time sprinkles a few drops of it on the ground, in token of the fact that on this occasion, too, by means of drink, they think of the deceased with joy.

Then they again return to the dwelling, where all are gathered, and celebrate an enjoyable night with song and dancing until daybreak.

Chapter XII

Character, Virtues and Vices

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[577] The Bush Negro, as I have already said above, has a great deal of respect for old age and for distinguished persons; with respect to their closest relations they are honest, which they cannot pride themselves on otherwise. In their ordinary affairs they [461] are not lazy, but work tirelessly whenever it is necessary. With respect to strangers they are generous and obliging, all the more [609] when they can assume that they may claim reward. Jealousy, [152] envy, and malice are their greatest vices. Concerning many [784] matters they have an antipathy that they call trefoe (treef). Thus, [781] for instance, one will eat something, the other not. Also they are very superstitious in small matters, to which they cling all the way down to distant generations; they call that obia (literally translated, bewitchment, magic).

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[123] An Auca girl who through attachment to my wife and me [589] has already lived with us in the town for fully five years, because since the death of her husband, who was one of my most trusted workers, she did not want to attach herself to another, and who performed all kinds of housework for us, carries her trefoe of not eating any unscaled fish so far that she will not even cook her food on a fire where there is a pot in which an unscaled fish was previously prepared. I know another one who uses no milk and also does not eat meat of any kind (with the exception of bacon), unless it be game, and then it must be prepared by her, on the grounds that everything is prepared with butter and that butter comes from

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123 Also, I am led to believe that for me they cherish a
466 more than general respect, since already for ten years now they
have been faithful workers for me, a privilege to which no
inhabitant in this colony other than myself can lay claim.

123 A family among them, whose head recently died --
778 according to their statements, through poisoning, which misdeed

[761] is supposed to have taken place out of envy, since I gave him
preference above others, which he deserved on account of his
faithfulness and industry -- has built a hut in the vicinity of its
idol sign, in which they placed a crude image cut out of cedar-
[237] wood and painted with white paint. Beside that image they
placed a little table and on it laid a number of quill feathers from
the gouvier (1), a little bottle with black liquid, symbolizing ink,

1. A pheasant, the Craux alberti L.

as well as some slips of paper. Near this little table they dug a
number of steps into the ground, and at the lowermost step they
made a gutter that runs in the direction of the river. Now when
they have a festival with dancing and they want to pay respect
to me, they place near it a number of children who constantly
pour water brought in jugs, which, flowing down the steps into the
gutter, streams riverward. While this ceremony takes place, songs
in my honor are sung by the festive crowd.

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[129] Now the image, according to their conception, is sup-
posed to be a representation of me, /36/ the white color the sign
that I am a white, while the quills, paper, and ink are the attributes
of the 'Whites' higher civilization, the streaming water that I stem
from the colonists who have come here from across the sea.

123 The wife of the headman referred to above came to me
• 589 in the town shortly after the death of her husband and remained to
choose my household as her permanent residence, to which I
gladly consented. Faithful and considerate, she performs not only
a great many household services, but even anticipates in this re-
spect the wishes of my wife, and out of love for us refuses any
monetary compensation.

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Structure of the Kabyé habitation. This habitation is directed by Kabyé (Aw. B. L. E18), a widow for a long time and not re-married, working with her children.

Working with her son:

--Amélia (Aw. B. L. F18), her daughter;

--Papahey (Aw. B. L. F23), her son;

--Akamina (Aw. B. L. F24), her daughter;

--Lélimichi (Aw. B. L. F27), daughter of Tchoi's sister of Kabyé.

Listing of several clearings of the Amélie and Kabyé habitations.

These clearings are totally mixed with each others' and with those of the Amélie habitation, which is normal since these lands all belong to the Awaia Bakha lineage.

No.	Last User	Year	By What Right	Duration of Last Follow Period
11	△ Béou (Aw. B. L. F17), for him-self	1954	Kabyé's son (does not work there habitually)	cut for the 1st time
12	○ Amélia; clearing cut by her husband Sindu	1954	Kabyé's daughter	id.
13	○ Lélimichi; clearing cut by her husband Axorjon	1954	Kabyé's niece	cut for the 1st time

133 case /

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Among the Refugee Blacks some very divorced couples are seen, who spend their whole lives together and who, in their old age, have completely united their destinies, living in the same house, either in the woman's village or the man's: for example, in the village of Lapeyrolle, Bera and his wife Assouan, in 1932 aged about 70 years, together for 45 years and having had eight children. But such cases are exceptional. Besides, they are not admired and held up as an example as one might believe; this man and this woman united each other, they remained together; if some day they no longer get along, they will divorce, that is all.

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Polygamy. Polygamy in the African sense of the word, that is, the simultaneous maintenance of several regular households, is exceptional among the Refugee Blacks because of their mode of living.

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--The wife is practically entirely dependent on her husband; an economy based mainly on wage earning and involving a relatively high standard of living makes it impossible for most men to maintain more than one household;

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--Even if a man had stable financial means at his disposal, he could scarcely maintain more than two households; for it is not acceptable, at least nowadays, for him to have done by others the customary chores: clearing, beam, house.

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On January 1, 1958 out of 134 men over 20 years old in the villages on the French bank, whose lives were well known to us, there were:

Men maintaining three households	1	1%
• • • two households	18	13%
• • • one household	104	77%
Bachelors, widowers, or recent divorcees	11	8%
	134	100% <u>hic!</u>

• [589]

